

Sunday 30th October 2022

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.
God is ever present, around us and within us,
we worship together in God.

Suggested Hymn Great is thy faithfulness

Listen [here](#)

Prayer

God of the morning and the night, of this time, all time and no time, of the earth, the universe and beyond, we come to you with thanksgiving in our heart.

When we think of your creation, we wonder at our place in it, feeling small and insignificant and yet you know each one of us by name, you are around us and within us and we are never alone. When we marvel at the intricacy of your creation and the amazing skills you have woven within us we are staggered by the way it all works. When we open our eyes on a new day, when in the midst of rain we see a rainbow, when we witness a random act of kindness we remember again your love for all your people and your promise of life eternal.

Loving God, we thank you, for creation, for family and friends, for new opportunities and for Jesus whose life and ministry are our model for life together and whose death and resurrection is the hope on which we build our lives. Gathered as church, gathered as your people, gathered in the name of Jesus we pray together saying,

Our Father....

Story You're all my favourites by Sam McBratney

Watch [here](#)

As parents we may all be faced with having to explain that our love grows with our family and we never set out to have favourites. This story invites us to explore that notion in terms of God. God is not human but we use the metaphor of parent to help us explore love. Although sometimes parents are tempted at times to have favourites, or perhaps they give the impression of favouritism in the way they respond to their children, the idea of God as a parent should not be expanded too far. God is, God is beyond our frail imaginings, God is everything and everywhere and God IS love. For me this means that the notion of favouritism simply does not equate with my understanding of God, or if it does then we are all God's favourites and there is nothing we can do to change that.

Hymn Come all you vagabonds

Listen [here](#)

Reading Luke 19:1-10

Reflection

Zacchaeus was a tax collector and was rich. In many people's eyes this made him a sinner, the assumption being that his wealth came from corruption in his position. Tax collectors were despised, even today we have a tendency to grumble about the tax man, along with the parking warden and companies who oversee car parks, we are quick to assign people to categories. Perhaps this stems from the fact that we are aware a relatively small percentage of people in positions of power abuse their position for personal gain, or sometimes simply because they can.

We read in the gospels how Jesus annoyed 'the righteous' by mixing with people they had categorised as sinners and cast out from regular society. Who do we categorise in this way? Who are today's outcasts from society? Who do we distrust and who do we fear?

This particular story in Luke demonstrates the message of Jesus and its power to bring about change.

Zacchaeus had heard of Jesus, had Jesus heard about Zacchaeus, was that how he knew his name? we are not told, maybe that fact is unimportant to Luke. Luke was a storyteller and this is a good story, a memorable story, especially as many of us remember singing the chorus in our younger years. Like any story there is a point being made, in this case that being included makes a difference. Being chosen makes us feel better about ourselves, it can make us re-evaluate our actions because we want to retain that feeling of wellbeing.

We read Jesus say, 'today salvation has come to this house because he too is a son of Abraham.'

What does salvation mean in today's society, or in today's church? Some people see it as being saved from eternal damnation but that definition assumes such a thing exists and that God is a punitive God. We say God is love, and many of us believe God's love is universal, there are no favourites or we are all favourites, everyone is included. Jesus is asserting that everyone is a child of God, everyone is included and so perhaps salvation is the recognition and realisation of that fact.

Knowing and living in that realisation can change our attitudes and behaviour. It can help us recognise where our actions have been less than loving and encourages us to make recompense, just as we read Zacchaeus doing in the story. This is metanoia, or repentance, a change of attitude and a change of direction. We follow a different path one which is more loving.

Jesus asserts that this is what the gospel is all about, this is his mission, to bring people to the full realisation of their inclusion in the love of God, their belonging as a part of all that is. Paul often used the word hamartia for sin, it means to miss the target, to be adrift from the loving course on which we all begin and to miss the target of our humanity. Zacchaeus may have missed the target but by including him in his mission Jesus brought him back onto the path and changed not just Zacchaeus' life but the lives of many others as a consequence.

Who might we include in our mission, who might we help realise their part in the circle of God's love? The reason we talk of outreach is because that is precisely what we are called to do, to reach out to those on the edge and beyond and through sharing the story of God's eternal and universal love, help them to recognise their worth and their interconnectedness, their interdependence with the whole of creation.

Psalm 23 (Psalms for a quantum world)

I am a part of creation,
the source of all being guides my path,
I am never alone.
In creation I find fulfilment,
places of reflection, inspiration and restoration;
hill and vale, sea and stream,
the stars and the depths,
when I am aware of my connectedness
I cannot get lost.
Even in the depths I am never alone
and need not fear,
for love surrounds me and holds me.
Everything I need and more
is provided by creation,
only my actions and those of others
can withhold what I need.
In oneness there is only love,
a giving from others;
I am always connected,
my whole life and beyond is part of creation.
I am always with the source of all being,

the eternal essence of creation.
I am one with all there is.

Heather Whyte 2015

Suggested Song For everyone born a place at the table
Watch [here](#)

Prayers

Our offering to God.

As we worship together, we pledge our commitment to sharing in the work of our church through our continued offering and by exploring new ways of living generously and sharing the message of hope that is God's love. Amen

Suggested hymn Will you come and follow me
Listen [here](#)

Blessing

May the blessing that is the knowledge of God, source of all being, the love of God discovered through Jesus and the inspiration of the Spirit which binds us together be with us on our journey this day and every day. Amen.